

John Coffee to Andrew Jackson, December 28, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN COFFEE TO JACKSON.

Huntsville, December 28, 1813.

Major Genl. Jackson,

Sir, while confined at this place by indisposition, my Brigade was ordered, over the Tennessee River, there to await your further orders; whilst crossing the river many individuals deserted, a correct report of which has never been made to me, and painfull to inform you, Captains Cantrill and Demsey at the head of their companies moved off, contrary to the orders of Lieut. Col Allen (Col Cannon being absent sick) and left the service, many days before they claimed a discharge. Their example no doubt have had the desired effects, they have since been followed by a great part of the Brigade.¹

¹ The cavalry and mounted riflemen had been allowed to retire into the settlements to recruit their horses and get winter clothing. They were on their return when they were thrown into panic by meeting the volunteer infantry on their way home. Coffee got 700 of them to the south side of the Tennessee at Ditto's, but they fell into such a stage of wasteful defiance that he advised Jackson to let them go home, since nothing good could be expected from them.

On the 26th. Instant, having recovered my health so as to be able to ride, I learned that my whole Brigade was recrossing the River, determined to go home. I mounted my horse and rode to the River, where I met your orders, and the Cavalry Regt. of Tennessee Volunteers, on the north bank, wherein you refered the Cavalry to the Governors letter,

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and the benefits they could therefrom derive etc. which was read in orders to them, They immediately broke off home; with the exception of some few officers and men whose names I will hereafter mention, who report themselves as being willing and desirous of continuing in service and finishing the campaign. The next morning the Rifle Regt. finished crossing to the north side of the river, and the field officers reported that they could not restrain them from moving on homewards, but that they would endeavour to halt them in the neighbourhood of Huntsville untill your answer to their remonstrance for a discharge, was received.

On the evening of the 27th, your express arrived with the answer expected, and on the morning following I waited on the Regiment and read it myself to them; when they determined, they would go home at all hazards, and contrary to your Orders, except as in the Cavalry Regt, a few officers and men who report themselves ready and willing to continue to obey orders and perform service.

Myself and Staff together with such officers and men as remain in service, are as usual subject to and await your further orders. in the mean time I shall take charge of, and provide as far as in my power for the late Volunteers from Tennessee and Madison, including Captain Hammonds Company of Rangers, and Captain Winstons company from madison County attached to the Cavalry Regt, untill your orders are received. The following is the names of those officers who have remained in service, the names of the privates have not been reported to me, though a number have enrolled themselves with the new volunteers, and will be reported as fast as they are known.

John Coffee Brigr. Genl, Alexr. Donelson Aid De camp, Basil Shaw Brig. Inspector, Neil B Rose Brig. q Master, Robt. H Dyer Lt. Col. Robert Allen Lt. Col, John H Gibson Major, Clement N. Reid Surgeon,—Fore surgeon, James Terry Adjutant, Saml, Meredith Adjutant, Charles Kavanugh Capt, Michael Molton Capt, Robert Litton Capt,—Harpool Capt, David Smith Capt, on det[ai]l, George Smith Capt, Bethell Allen Capt, Joshua Haskel forage master, Robert Moore q master, Wm. Grubbe master of Sword, William Mitchell

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Capt, John D Raglen Lieut, Lion S Reid, Cornet, Edmund Terryl Segt. major, Alfred Cantrel Segt. major.